THE FLESHERTON ADVANCE

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F. J. THURSTON, Editor.

Interesting Places In London As They Appear In Wartime

(By Hugh Templin)

In the previous articles of this series I have covered the story of the trip from New York to Lisbon, to London and return by Ireland and Portugal, the story going to the papers all across Canada. I had expected to complete the story in that series, but quite a number of persons have written and asked for more, and there were many things which I passed over quickly or left out entirely. For that same reason I am retracing my steps to some extent and will write a few more stories for readers.

Most stories of London seem to take it for granted that the reader is quite familiar with the city, having lived there or visited it. Yet nine out of ten readers of this paper never saw London and while many of the names and places in London are well known throughout the world names such as Tower of London, Piccadilly Circus, Buckingham Palace, Hyde Park and the like,yet they don't mean much to most native born Canadians, nor even to people from the Old Country who never happen to visit London.

I am one of those village natives who don't like large cities on first acjuaintance. Though I lived several years in Toronto (and got my wife there), I never was really fond of Toronto. I remember my first visit to Montreal as a boy, and I loathed the place then, though I like to go there now. (Quebec City I always liked, however.) In three times in New York, I have failed to feel any enthusiasm.

Yet I liked London from the start and I think all Canadians feel the same way about it. Perhaps it is because it is the centre of the Empire, and the King and Queen are therer, and Westminister Abbey and the Houses of Parliament, and all that. So often one runs across a familiar name and says,"Oh, I always wanted to see that." But we don't think that is the explanation entirely.

One reason why I liked London was because it didn't try to overawe me, New York does. There are no skyscrapers in London. It seems that a building by-law decrees that no building can be more than six stories in height. As a result, whole blocks in building are an even six stories high, and it seems obvious that the builders co-operated.

There was a queer story going around London last Fall. The London University buildings are fairly new, part of the money having been supplied by a former Canadian millionaire. It is said that when the great central tower was built, the by-law was simply disregarded and the tower was built with more than the regulation six stories. It isn't being used as a University now, but houses the Department of Public Information and it has been bombed. One bomb is said to have struck the top of the tower and now it is exactly six stories high.

THE HEART OF OLD LONDON

The heart of old London is an interesting place and it's easy to find one's way around, even in these days when maps are unobtainable. One reason is because the Thames runs through the centre of the city, from west to east and one can always find his way to the river, even in a blackout.

The Thames really isn't much of a river. It is broad in London only because it is still practically at sea level, but at London, it soon dwindles away until it isn't any bigger than the Grand at Furness. It is a dirty, murky stream, with rubbish floating on it most of the time. The big boats come up as far as Tower Bridge in the East End, being the bridge nearest to the sea. Its shape is familiar to nearly everyone, with high towers at each end and an elevated walk, so that persons can walk across even when the two halves of the main bridge have been lifted up to let the ships pass. Actually, we don't suppose anyone bothers to climb up inside the towers just for that reason, it being quicker and easier to wait until the steamboat goes past. Most of the important dock area is nearer the sea.

The ancient Tower of London is at the north end of Tower Bridge. It is down in a bit of a hole, but looks exactly like its pictures. In the yard behind the Tower of London there was a barrage balloon with the machinery for raising and lowering it, and the day I was there the crew of the balloon had a soccer game going on in the courtyard of the Tower, surely a romantic place for a game of football.

Apparently the Tower has been hit only once by a bomb, and that was what is generally called a "near miss" rather than a hit. The bomb evidently exploded against a small bastion and the old, old wall, which was six feet thick, was blown out, disclosing the little rooms, with their miniature fireplaces. The grates in the fireplaces couldn't have been over a foot wide and they must have been hardy people who got along with so little heat in those rooms.

Incidentely, I missed the traditional English climate. The weeks I was in London were sunnyand warm. The hotel, with "central heating" as it's called over there, was invariably too warm. I never had to depend on fireplaces on chilly nights. But there is a story of a Canadian climate. He said: "There isn't much difference between the climates of England and Canada except that we leave ours outdoors."

The East End of London has been severely bombed. There are reasons for that. First, a plane coming up the Thames reaches the East End first and it's easier to unload bombs there. Second, and more important, the Germans naturally supposed that they could starve London by destroying the docks and shipping. They no doubt thought they could prevent ships from using the Thames. They were wrong. I believe the docks did suffer heavily, ut they were repaired and in operation when I wandered down that way on the bus one day. And I know that ships were using the Thames, for I saw them, inchuding a convoy going out the mouth of the river with each ship trailing one of the barrage balloons behind it.

But the little houses of the East End of London show the scars of the bombing. While blocks are completely gone. I saw two city blocks piled high with bricks from demolished houses. These houses were old and many of them are true slums. They will never be rebuilt as they were before.

Farthur up the Thames there is a steady stream of barges and tugs. The tugs have smokestacks which can be laid down flat to go under the bridges. Little river steamers also go up the Thames a surprising distance, considering how little water there is in it. A series of locks provide the necessary stretches of quiet and level water. In the days of the invasion scare, it was feared that enemy seaplanes might come down on these stretches of water along the Thames, so old barges and other obstacles of various kinds were moored in the centre of the stream.

There are quite a number of other bridges over the Thames in the heart of London besides Tower Bridge. The names are familiar, London bridge, most famous of them all, is the next one upstream from Tower Bridge. Then there's Southwark bridge, and Blackfrairs bridge, which is opposite St. Paul's Cathedral. Waterloo bridge is at the big bend in the Thames. It leads to Waterloo station, south of the river. Next bridge is Westminster, just at the corner of the Houses of Parliament, with Big Ben in the clock tower just west of the bridge. Lambeth bridge is beyond the Parliament, and above that I never knew the bridges by name.

These bridges must have presented alluring targets to many a German bomber, but apparently not one of them ever was hit seriously. I examined the stonework of Tower bridge quite carefully and there was no sign of scars from bomb fragments, nor machine guns. Hon. Arthur Henderson, who was then a member of the inner cabinet, sat beside me at dinner one day. He said the Germans had wasted thousands of bombs on these bridges and had never scored a direct hit. He lived down towards the east end of London and he said the bed of the river must be covered with bombs that missed their mark.

Waterloo bridge is being rebuilt, but not as the result of damage by bombing. Work on the new bridge began before the war and has kept on. The structure seemed to be about finished. There were two emergency bridges over the Thames. They were temporary wooden structures, with a span left out so tugs would not have to lower their stacks. The idea was to use them in case one of the other bridges blew up, but neither had ever been used. Such things as these caused doubts about the value of bombing. But to offset this, there was a long line of ruined factories on the south bank. If the bridges had escaped, the factories certainly had not..

Along the north side of the Thames between Blackfrairs bridge and Westminster, runs the Thames Embankment. Along the river side is an iron fence. Inside that is a broad sidewalk with trees along it. The road has steady traffic, the "trams" running quite close together, and half a dozen routes of double-deck buses as well. Here and there, old sailing vessels or training ships are anchored along the wall. On the side of the road away from the river, there are many parks and gardens. The garden behind the Savoy had statues of Gilbert and Sullivan, the profits of whose popular operas provided the money to build the hotel and the adjoining theatre. Cleopatra's Needle, an Egyptian obelisk, stands on the bank of the Thames behind the Savoy. It is unharmed by bombs.

I had intended to cover much of London in this article, but the rest will have to wait for another week.

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At a meeting in Brampton last week of the truckers of this section of Ontario, it was decided, owing to the gasoline and rubber shortage, to ask all farmers having stock to ship to let the trucker know at least 48 hours ahead of the time he wanted his stock called for. This will cut out unnecessary or overlapping trips and contribute in no small way to the war effort.

D. MacARTHUR,
ARCH. McKECHNIE

MAJOR W. E. ARRRIS

Major Harris arrived in England a couple of weeks ago to complete a tank operating course. He received notice of his elevation to Major on his arrival in England. He is O.C. of "A" Squadron of the 26th Tank Battalion.

The man who is careful to tell the truth does not need as good a memory as some others.

We are not going to admit that the so-called "motod age" is officially dead until someone starts building a livery stable on a parking lot.

A policeman in Detroit saw men coming out of a shoe-shine parlor with dirty shoes and upon further investigation he uncovered a betting agency. Obviously he spends his evenings reading Sherlock Holmes.

Notice To Horsemen

The Imported German Coach Stallion "Gralf" will stand for season of 1942 at Johnston Bros., Vandeleur, on Tuesday night until Wednesday noon, health and weather permitting. Come and see a real horse.

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Future Events

HOLDFAST CLUB MEETING

The regular meeting of the Holdfast Club will be held at the home of Mrs. John Stewart on Thursday, June 11th, in place of the 10th. Mr. T. Stewart Cooper will address the gathering. Everybody welcome.

OPTICAL

D. Campbell, optometrist, will be at Markdale next Tues., June 9th, from 1.30 to 5 p.m. Our prices are very moderate. Prompt attention is given to all repair work.

EUGENIA DANCE

A dance will be held in Eugenia Orange Hall, under auspices of T.O.L. 1118, on Friday, June 5th. Admission: 25c., children 5c. Lunch.

COUNTY L. O. L.

The semi-annual County meeting will be held in Orange Valley on Tuesday, June 9th at 8.30 p.m. There will be two special speakers: Past Grand Master Millar of Bognor and Bro. White, insurance representative. —Milton Irwin, Sec. County Lodge.

DANCE AT MAXWELL

A dance will be held in Maxwell hall on Wed., June 10th, sponsored by Stephen's Corners war workers. Music supplied by full Fourth Line orchestra. Admission 25c and 15c.

DANCE AT DUNDALK

Dancing in the "Crystal Gardens" Dundalk every Friday, commencing June 12th. The best of music by Rubin J. Kirk and his popular orchestra.

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